

Common Core State Standards

Why have Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education consistently, from school-to-school and state-to-state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students.

Who is part of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative?

In a collaborative effort, 48 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia, committed to developing a common core of state standards in English-language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. This state-led effort has been coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) with input from ACT, College Board, Achieve Inc., NASBE and State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO).

What is the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative?

CCSS Initiative is a state-led initiative to develop a set of kindergarten through grade 12 education standards in English/language arts and mathematics. The standards would serve as a national foundation for states to adopt and implement. Currently, education standards are developed and implemented on a state-by-state basis. The Maryland State Board of Education adopted the CCSS in June 2010.

How will the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) be different from what Maryland teachers currently use in the classroom?

Maryland education standards, known as the State Curriculum, are already very strong and teachers have been using them for several years in the classroom. Standards are a first step – a key building block – in providing our young people with a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in college and work. Maryland's Curriculum Standards do not tell teachers how to teach but they do help guide teachers on the knowledge and skills students should have so teachers can create the best lessons and learning environments. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success.

With CCSS, teachers will still have the same flexibility they do now to develop lessons using the Common Core standards as a guide. Joining the CCSS Initiative also provides the opportunity to work with educators across the nation to raise the quality of education for all students, no matter where they live. Through shared experiences and knowledge, Maryland educators will become part of a national community, working toward preparing students to compete with their national and international peers, both in college and in the workplace.

When will the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) be implemented in Maryland?

The Maryland State Board of Education formally adopted CCSS in June 2010. Over the next year, educators from across the state will review and align CCSS with State Curriculum standards. A draft of Common Core State Curriculum (CCSC) will be presented to the State Board for acceptance by June 2011. Upon acceptance, professional development will begin for educators across the state.

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Who was involved in developing the standards?

To create high-quality education standards, development occurred in three phases by groups that included teachers, parents, administrators, and educational experts, as well as select governors and state school officers. Teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. The National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), among other organizations have been instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards.

- **Standards Development Workgroup:** made initial determination of what standards to include and wrote a draft document
- **Feedback Group:** provided research-based feedback on the draft documents
- **Validation Committee:** reviewed and verified the standards met criteria

Will assessments be developed for the standards?

There will not be a single, nationwide assessment developed for CCSS Initiative. However, states have begun to work together in consortia to pool resources and expertise for developing assessments based on the standards. Maryland is participating on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers consortium. Assessment development will take a number of years to develop, validate, and pilot test. Final assessments will not be available until 2014-2015.

What were the criteria used to develop the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

The standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.

What content areas and grade levels are included in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

There are two sets of education standards, spanning Kindergarten through grade 12—English-language arts and math. English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen because these two subject areas provide core skills upon which students build skill sets in other subject areas. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes.

- The English/language arts standards can be found at <http://corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards>. Within the English/language arts standards are literacy standards for history and social studies, and sciences and technical subjects.
- The math standards can be found at <http://corestandards.org/the-standards/mathematics>.

Expectations for college and career-readiness in reading and writing are also defined in CCSS and can be found in the English/language arts standards. These expectations focus on the knowledge and skills students' grades 6 through 12 will need upon high school graduation to succeed in credit-bearing college courses and entry-level workforce jobs or training programs.

Research from the early childhood and higher education communities have also informed the development of the standards. Maryland includes pre-kindergarten in its State Curriculum and will expand CCSS to include pre-kindergarten.

Additional information can be found at www.corestandards.org or www.MarylandPublicSchools.org.